

# FALLS AMONG OLDER ADULTS

## Facts about older adult fall-related injuries in Utah

- ❖ Falls are the leading cause of injury death and disability for Utahns ages 65 and older.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ On average, 80 older Utahns die, 2,700 are hospitalized, and 6,900 are treated in emergency departments (ED) for fall-related injuries each year.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ More than one-third of adults ages 65 years and older fall each year.<sup>2</sup>



## 2001–2005 UTAH INJURY DATA, AGES 65+

### SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

#### WHAT

- 394 deaths<sup>1</sup>
- 13,557 hospitalizations<sup>1</sup>
- 34,693 ED visits<sup>1</sup> (Years 2000-2004)

#### WHO

- More males die from fall-related injuries than females (55% to 45%)<sup>1</sup>
- Females were treated for over 70% of the hospitalizations and ED visits for fall-related injuries<sup>1</sup>

#### HOW

- The leading causes of fall death were from fall on same level and fall from stairs/steps<sup>1</sup>
- The leading cause of fall hospitalization and ED visits was fall on same level from slipping, tripping, or stumbling<sup>1</sup>
- Falls are the leading cause of traumatic brain injuries in Utahns 65 and older<sup>3</sup>

#### WHERE

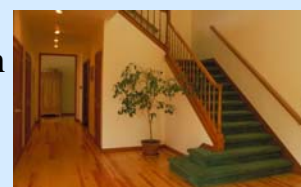
- Residents of Beaver, Juab, and Sevier counties had the highest rates of fall hospitalizations<sup>1</sup>

#### HOW MUCH

- Hospital charges for injuries from falls in Utah were over \$205 million, for an average of \$15,450 per patient<sup>1</sup>

### PREVENTING FALLS IN THE HOME<sup>4</sup>

The majority of falls happen in or around the house.



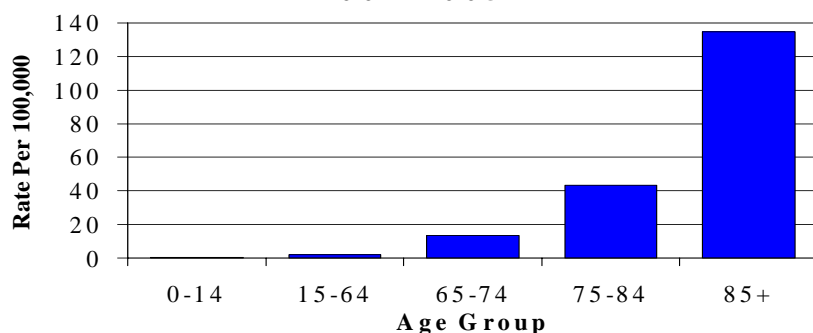
Therefore, it makes sense to reduce home hazards and make living areas safer. Seniors should:

- Remove things that can be tripped over (such as books and clothes) from stairs and walkways
- Remove small throw rugs
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors
- Have grab bars put in next to the toilet and in the tub or shower
- Have handrails put in on all stairways
- Improve the lighting in the home
- Wear shoes that give good support and have non-slip soles; avoid wearing slippers

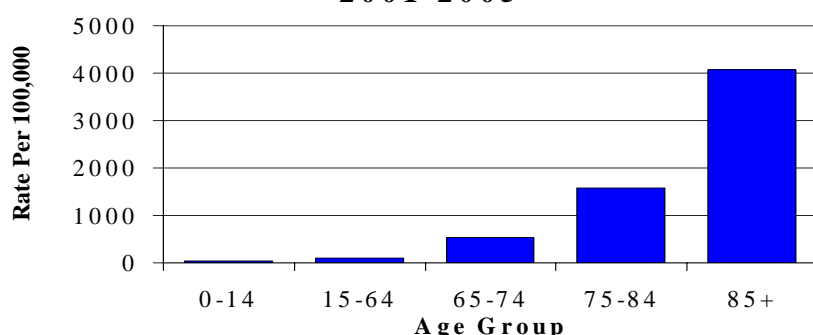
## Falls by Age Group

The rate of fall-related injury and death increases with age, with the highest rates occurring among those 85 and older.<sup>1</sup>

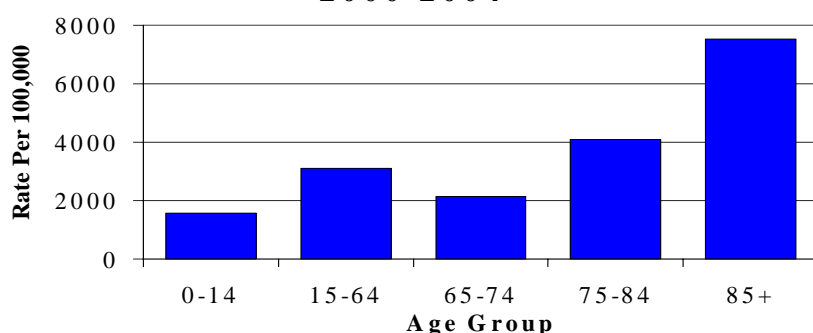
**Utah Fall-Related Deaths, 2001-2005**



**Utah Fall-Related Hospitalizations, 2001-2005**



**Utah Fall-Related ED Visits, 2000-2004**



## FALL PREVENTION TIPS

Older adults can take several steps to protect their independence and reduce their risk of falling. They can:

- Exercise regularly; exercise programs that increase strength and improve balance are especially good



- Reduce hazards in their home that can lead to falls



- Ask their doctor or pharmacist to review their medicines—both prescription and over-the-counter—to reduce side effects and interactions



- Have their eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year



- Improve the lighting in their home; use more lamps and install nightlights<sup>4</sup>



## BEGIN A REGULAR EXERCISE PROGRAM

Exercise is one of the most important ways to reduce your chances of falling. It makes you stronger and helps you feel better. Exercises that improve balance and coordination, like Tai Chi, are the most helpful.

Lack of exercise leads to weakness and increases your chances of falling.



<sup>1</sup> Utah Department of Health, <http://ibis.health.utah.gov>. ED data is for years 2000-2004. <sup>2</sup> Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation 2001;82:1050-1056. <sup>3</sup> VIPP, TBI in Utah, 2004. <sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.